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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study done with Anglos and Hispanics in Texas, focusing on the pending English Only legislation and their awareness of and attitudes towards it and what biases these attitudes were based upon. A 1-page, 2-sided, questionnaire was distributed to 328 Anglo and Hispanic subjects in a predominantly Hispanic city. Forty-seven percent of respondents were Mexican American; 43 percent were Anglo. Results suggest that over 50 percent of respondents were aware of the English Only Movement, Anglos were more than three times more likely to support it, and the most common variable to explain these results was ethnicity rather than education, sex, or age. Bilingual Mexican Americans were more likely to be against the movement than monolingual Mexican Americans; bilingual Anglos were less likely than monolingual Anglos to support it. Knowledge of the movement and bilingualism thus appeared to mediate attitudes. A blank copy of the questionnaire is appended. (Contains nine references.) (Author/NAV)

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Language Planning and the Hispanic Discourse Community

In March 1995, legislation was again introduced into the U.S. House to make English the official language of the United States. Since then a number of language bills have been introduced in Congress stressing two main themes: the need to preserve English as the "social glue" uniting Americans and the alleged failure of bilingual education to assimilate immigrants. Such legislation has been cited as racist and anti-immigrant, while others argue that it will bind a multicultural people together. Regardless, it would radically affect the discourse community of Mexican Americans in South Texas whose ethnic identity/pride is tied to their Spanish language usage. Research was conducted in South Texas with three objectives: 1) to investigate the degree of awareness of this legislation by both Hispanics and Anglos; 2) to examine attitudes towards it; and 3) to determine what factors (e.g., age, sex, education, ethnicity) appear to underlie biases for/against such legislation. Questionnaires were distributed to 328 Anglo and Hispanic subjects in Corpus Christi, Texas. Results indicated that, a) over 50% of the respondents were aware of the English Only Movement, b) Anglos were more than three times more likely to support such legislation, and c) the most important variable to explain these results was ethnicity rather than education, sex, or age. A proposed study (Sullivan & Schatz) will further study attitudes toward the EOM by examining an hypothesized link between it and psychological identification with the United States. Psychological issues include patriotism, cultural nationalism, support for immigration, and the use of Spanish in private versus public domains.

The attempt to legislate language is nothing new in the U.S. It has been especially evident during periods of high immigration. The highest period in the last 100 years was 1900-1910, a period which saw language legislation affecting German, Japanese, and Chinese Americans. The second highest period of immigration was 1981-1990 (Ricento, 1995). As a result, we see a resurgence of the call to legislate language--a call which is being publicly debated in many arenas. One timely example occurred in north Texas when a judge ordered an Hispanic woman to speak only English to her five year old daughter as speaking Spanish was a form of child abuse. His rationale was that not knowing English would doom her to life as a maid. His order was eventually rescinded. Presidential candidate Bob Dole has called for an end to bilingual education and a federal mandate to declare English the official language. "Insisting that all our citizens are fluent in English is a welcoming act of inclusion and insist we must. We need the glue of language to help hold us together" (Reyes, 1995, A13). New calls to legislate language have been

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made since the recent Canadian vote for independence. Speaker of the House Gingrich promptly called for an end to bilingual education and for legislation to make English the official language.

Although there have been attempts in the past at the federal level, it is at the state level that language legislation has been successful. To date twenty-two states have passed laws designating English as the official language. This year, however, a number of bills have been submitted to Congress to make English the official language of the government of the U.S.

The driving force behind recent attempts to make English the official language is US English. The late Senator Hayakawa, who had been promoting the official English issue since 1981, was a founding member along with John Tanton, the organization's first president. US English has been a tax-exempt lobbying organization promoting language reform since 1983. An examination of this organization's background provides insight into its true agenda. US English began with ties to anti-immigration and restrictionist groups. Tanton also founded the Federation for American Immigration Reform in 1979 which shared personnel and funding with US English. A 1988 confidential memo written by Tanton revealed what had long been suspected--racism and fear of immigrants, targeted mainly at Hispanics, drove the organization. In the memo, Tanton revealed his concern about the fertility of Hispanics and wrote "Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!" (Crawford, 1992, p. 151). He also questioned the intelligence and values of the Hispanics. This attack is not at all surprising. Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the U.S., and many Anglo Americans feel threatened by this. Large numbers of Hispanics live in California and that has been the field for much of the language debate.

US English has targeted California since its inception. Examining the activities in that state can illustrate what it proposes to do at the national level. Between 1983 and 1986 there were three initiatives: Proposition O, Proposition 38, and Proposition 63. Proposition "O" solicited the opinion of voters in San Francisco on the use of English Only for ballots and voting materials which were being printed in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The proposition received 66% of the voters' support. This was followed in 1984 by Proposition 38 which asked the same question but was a statewide initiative. Seventy-two percent of the voters supported it. Then the campaign began to make English the official language in California through Proposition 63. The arguments in support of this amendment were that English was being eroded, especially by Spanish and that bilingual ballots are a disincentive to learn English. Another argument posed was that bilingual education was an ineffective, $500,000,000 annual waste in California. A founding member of US

English and head of the California campaign, Stanley Diamond, stated that Californians felt that "New immigrants did not have the sense of personal responsibility that immigrants had in the past" and that paying for bilingual ballots was insulting to them [Californians] (Diamond, 1990, p. 116). And he reported that he personally knew that the "Parents [he includes Hispanics] and teachers are close to revolt at the continuing teaching of children in Spanish..." (p. 117).

Supporters of the proposition included the California Republican Party, California Republican Women Federated, the American Legion, the California Farm Bureau Federation. The opposition included the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Japanese American Citizens League, La Raza, the League of Women Voters and other organizations. Proposition 63 won with 73% of the vote.

In October, 1995, members of Congress debated the pros and cons of English-only legislation in a hearing sponsored by the House Early Childhood, Youth and Families subcommittee. Sponsors of the four major "Language of Government" bills testified stressing several themes: the need to preserve English as the "social glue" uniting Americans, the alleged failure of bilingual education to assimilate immigrants and the possibility of civil strife brought on by language diversity. Representative Emerson (R-MO) claimed in October that he has 200+ co-sponsors for his bill (218 votes are needed to pass legislation).

Hearings are still being held in the Senate on this issue. This spring, Sen. Simon (D-IL) gave testimony before the Senate Committee on Government Affairs on S.356, the Language of Government Act of 1995. He spoke out against declaring English the official language and instead called for more funding for classes so that those who cannot speak English can learn. He believes that there is an implicit assumption by English Only Movement (EOM) supporters that individuals need to be coerced into learning English, which he believes to be far from the truth. He said that ESL adult learners (who are lucky enough to get into classes) are less likely to drop out than the average student. Additionally, language legislation, he believes, would exacerbate escalating racial tensions. Instead we should accommodate diversity and draw from its strengths.

Major Arguments

Most arguments for the EOM are presented in the form of utilitarian appeals, most notably that adoption of English only would facilitate communication across ethnic groups and thereby forge a more cohesive and unified nation.

Arguments for EOM	Arguments Against EOM
1. Promotes unity in a pluralistic nation	Fragments society
2. Provides language learning opportunities and speeds language shift.	Ignores current rapid shift to English and loss of native language
3. Ends divisive bilingual policies which promote ghettoization	Disenfranchises minorities, restricts individual rights, impacts other education issues
4. Promotes rapid integration into society	Appeals to racist beliefs
	Ignores demand for multilingual abilities

The Quebec separatist movement is cited as evidence that bilingualism is divisive. The history and power relations between the two different language speaking communities in Canada cannot be compared to situation in U.S. Edward Chen of the American Civil Liberties Union of Norther California reports that the U.S. situation is quite different from Canada because in the Southwestern U.S., Hispanics are 300 times more likely to speak English than French speaking Quebec residents. Opponents believe that the EOM would make minority groups feel more disenfranchised thereby encouraging a separatist movement.

Proponents of the EOM argue that immigrants are resistant to learn English and must be forced to do so. Opponents counter that immigrants know that it is necessary to learn English (as the long waiting lists for ESL classes illustrate) and several studies have shown that immigrant groups shift to English more rapidly now than those who immigrated to the U.S. 100 years ago. Within one or two generations, English becomes the primary language of communication among immigrants to the U.S. (Padilla et al, 1995).

Historian and former White House advisor Arthur Schlesinger (1992) has argued that bilingualism promotes self-ghettoization which results in racial antagonism. Gingrich believes bilingualism ghettoizes people into "groups more easily manipulated for political purposes often by self-appointed leaders" (1995, p. 9). Opponents argue that EOM legislation is divisive and will promote discrimination; that it would give people cause to discriminate against those whose native language is not English. What is ignored in the arguments for EOM is the positive attribute of bilingualism in the international marketplace.

The Study

The issue of language legislation impacts minorities in the U.S. who already face problems of disenfranchisement and discrimination. In Texas there has been a flurry of discussion focusing

on English language legislation and the proposal of a law similar to Proposition 187 of California which would deny education, social and health care to illegal immigrants. An October 1995 Harte Hanks poll (Ray & Tinsley, 1995) found that 61% of Texans would support a similar proposition. However, Governor Bush of Texas has stated that not only he would not support one but that he supports English and Spanish language education (English Plus). English Plus is a response to the move to make English the official language. This organization believes that all U.S. residents should have the opportunity to not only be proficient in English but to learn another language. They support bilingual education and see bilingualism as a plus. In 1989, New Mexico became the first state to endorse English Plus. Governor Bush believes that Americans must learn how to speak English but that it is also important for Texans to learn Spanish. Texas Republicans tend to disagree with their governor--31% of Republicans strongly favored EOM laws compared to only 15% of Democrats. Sixty percent of Republicans in Texas want only English to be taught in schools compared to 34% of Democrats according to the October poll.

In study conducted in South Texas, we investigated the degree of awareness of the EOM by both Hispanics and Anglos, examined their attitudes towards it, and attempted to determine what factors (age, sex, education, ethnicity, etc.) appear to underlie biases for/against such legislation. A questionnaire was designed and administered by graduate students for a sociolinguistics class. The questionnaire was one page with questions on both sides. The first side required respondents to answer questions about their knowledge of the EOM, languages spoken, and place of birth. The second side began with a list of the major proposals included in the EOM (see Appendix) and then asked whether the respondent is "For" or "Against" the EOM and to make any comments. It also asked for demographic information: sex, age, schooling, occupation ethnicity.

The questionnaire was administered to 328 respondents in the predominately Hispanic city of Corpus Christi, TX. Most were students at the university which the graduate students attended, but the questionnaire was also administered to a smaller number of people in the workplace. Some respondents left questions on the survey unanswered. Forty-seven percent of the respondents were Mexican American, 43% were Anglo American, and 10% were "other." First, the respondent was asked if s/he knew what the EOM is. Fifty-one percent reported affirmatively and 49% did not know. When asked if they were for or against the EOM, we found three types of responses: "For," "Against," and one that we had not anticipated--"For, but against the elimination of bilingual education" (one of the proposals of the EOM). Overall, 183 were against the EOM while 123 were pro EOM. However, out of the 123 that supported the EOM, 40 did not endorse the

elimination of bilingual education, and Mexican Americans were less likely to make this distinction than Anglo Americans were.

Few significant findings were uncovered. First, ethnicity overwhelmingly determined attitude towards the EOM. In a 1988 exit poll, Hispanics and Anglos in California and Texas were asked how they would vote on a proposition making English as the only official language of the US if they could vote "today" (Schmid, 1992). As in our study, ethnicity was the strongest predictor of support. Schmid found that Anglos were up to three times more likely to favor the proposition than were Hispanics. Our results showed 18% of Mexican Americans supported the EOM, while 65% of Anglos were in favor of it. We checked to see if prior knowledge of the EOM influenced their decision. Overall, there was a trend (not statistically significant) for those who did not have prior knowledge and who supported the EOM to outnumber those who had prior knowledge and supported the EOM.

Knowledge of EOM and Attitudes
Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans

Knowledge	For	*For...	Against
YES	45	13	103
NO	38	27	80
Total	83	40	183

*For... For EOM but against eliminating bilingual education

We also examined whether being bilingual influences attitudes toward the EOM. We found that bilingual Mexican Americans were more likely to be against the EOM than monolingual Mexican Americans (see below). Bilingual Anglos were also less likely than monolingual Anglos to support the EOM; however, cell size (sample size) was too small for statistical significance. There were only nine bilingual Anglo Americans (113 bilingual Mexican Americans).

Mexican Americans

Language	% Against	% For	Total %
Monolingual	68	32	100
Bilingual	86	14	100

Chi square = 4.53
p value = 0.03

Anglo Americans

Language	% Against	% For	Total %
Monolingual	35	65	100
Bilingual	47	53	100

Chi square = 0.91
p value = 0.34

Discussion

Ethnicity appears to be the main factor for attitudes toward the EOM. Interestingly, knowledge of the movement and, more significantly, bilingualism appear to mediate these attitudes. As noted above, arguments in favor of EOM are presented in terms of the facilitation of communication. However, a proposed study by Sullivan and Schatz will investigate the hypothesis that these attitudes are also driven by more psychological, "social identity" concerns. They hypothesize that pro-EOM attitudes are positively related to individuals' psychological identity as Americans. They advance the following predictions: 1) Attitudes toward the EOM will be positively related to feelings of patriotism toward the US; 2) attitudes toward EOM will be positively related to US cultural nationalism, or concern for the homogeneity and distinctiveness of American culture; 3) attitudes toward EOM will be negatively related to attitudes toward immigrant and support for immigration; 4) attitudes toward EOM will be negatively related to attitudes toward the use of Spanish; and, 5) less support will be found for EOM among Hispanics than among Anglos and these differences will be augmented by Hispanics' level of identification with their ethnic group and attenuated by Hispanics' level of identification with the US.

The proposed study will focus beyond the issue of ethnicity and inform larger societal debates such as assimilationism versus multiculturalism, individual versus group rights and state versus ethnic nationalism.

SURVEY

This survey is for a study being conducted at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi. Please read and respond to the following questions. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

1. Do you know what the ***English Only Movement*** is? (circle one) YES NO

2. If yes, please explain briefly.

_____

_____

_____

3. What languages do you speak comfortably?

_____

3a. If more than one language, which was your first language?_____

4. Where were you born?_____

4a. If born outside the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?_____

4b. How long have you lived in Texas?_____

5. What was your mother's first language?_____

6. What was your father's first language?_____

(over)

The ***English Only Movement*** proposes to do the following through a constitutional amendment:

* make English the official language of the United States
* conduct all government business in English only
* eliminate bilingual education
* require competence in English for naturalization
* expand English language learning opportunities

7. Are you for or against this issue? (circle one) FOR AGAINST
Please comment on the reason for your choice:

_____

_____

Please provide us with the following information about you:

8. Sex: (circle) MALE FEMALE

9. Age:_____

10. Highest education level completed:_____

11.Occupation:_____

12. Ethnicity/race: ___ African American ___ Native American
___ Asian American ___ White/Anglo American
___ Mexican American ___ Other (please specify)
_____

13. Political Affiliation:

___ Democrat ___ Independent
___ Republican ___ Other (please specify)
_____

14. Did you vote in the last presidential election? (circle) YES NO

Thanks again!

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